

JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS

A game about creatively expanding the vendor pool.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

4+

TIME REQUIRED

60 minutes

COMPLEXITY



THEMES

Expanding the bidding pool, strategizing to promote competition, negotiation, RFP writing.

GAMEPLAY

Help Townsville meet contract award goals by creating a large and diverse bidding pool on an upcoming RFP.

Then roll to find out how many quality proposals you got!

BACKGROUND

The City of Townsville is on the cusp of its bicentennial! The Mayor has announced a weekend of citywide celebrations.

With businesses of different sizes interested in the event catering contract, can your team release an RFP that generates quality competition?

In this game, you'll play as City staff who are revising an RFP to allow as diverse a vendor group as possible to bid.

Expand your bidding pool to get proposals from a variety of businesses, then roll to find how many quality proposals you got!

MATERIALS INCLUDED**GAME GUIDE****TOWNSVILLE FACT SHEET****VENDOR PERSPECTIVE SHEETS (4)****TOWNSVILLE CATERING RFP****RFP REVISION WORKSHEET****SCORING SHEET****MATERIALS NOT INCLUDED****6-SIDED DIE** 🎲**SETUP** ⌚ 15 MINS

Get into groups of 4. Make sure each group has all materials:

- Townsville Fact Sheet
- Bicentennial Catering RFP
- RFP Revision Worksheet
- Vendor Perspective Sheets
(There are four; print extra if needed for a larger group.)

Read the Play section out loud. Read the Townsville Fact Sheet out loud. Each player reads their Vendor Perspective Sheet. (2 mins)
This info is not secret; collaboration will be key.

OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to...

- Explain the value of diversifying bidding pools
- Describe the major barriers to promoting competition in the bidding process
- Select appropriate strategies to expand their bidding pool
- Identify relevant strategies to use in their own entity

PLAY ⌚ 30 MINS

The group will have 30 minutes to discuss the RFP and use the RFP Template to revise it so that as diverse a vendor group as possible is eligible to bid.

At the end of the 30 minutes, the Facilitator reads through the "Scoring" and "Debrief" section out loud.

HOW TO WIN

Based on which vendors were eligible, your team got one or two proposals from each vendor type. But how good is the final group of proposals?

Roll the die once to determine each proposal's quality. The higher the number, the better quality of the proposal you got.

1-3 = Proposal is of poor quality and is immediately rejected.

4-5 = Proposal is of average quality.

6 = An excellent proposal and an outstanding vendor for the Bicentennial.

SCORING ⌚ 5 MINS Take a look at the revised RFP. Which vendors are now eligible to bid?**IS NATIONAL EVENT DINING GROUP ELIGIBLE?**

If YES, your team receives 1 proposal from this type of vendor. Roll the die to determine its quality.

Circle the outcome:

(1-3) Poor (4-5) Average (6) Excellent

IS EVERYFORK SUSTAINABLE EVENTS ELIGIBLE?

If YES, your team receives 1 proposal from this type of vendor. Roll the die to determine its quality.

Circle the outcome:

(1-3) Poor (4-5) Average (6) Excellent

IS SEMBRANDO SALUD CATERING CO-OP ELIGIBLE?

If YES, your team receives 2 proposals from this type of vendor. Roll the die to determine their quality.

Circle the outcome for Proposal #1:

(1-3) Poor (4-5) Average (6) Excellent

Circle the outcome for Proposal #2:

(1-3) Poor (4-5) Average (6) Excellent

IS TOWNSVILLE FAMILY KITCHEN ELIGIBLE?

If YES, your team receives 2 proposals from this type of vendor. Roll the die to determine their quality.

Circle the outcome for Proposal #1:

(1-3) Poor (4-5) Average (6) Excellent

Circle the outcome for Proposal #2:

(1-3) Poor (4-5) Average (6) Excellent

Just because you received many proposals, doesn't mean they are all of equal quality.

How many competitive proposals did your RFP get?

DEBRIEF ⌚ 10 MINS

Take 10 minutes to discuss.

- Who got all four vendors to be eligible? What strategies did you use?
- What were the challenges of getting more than one vendor to be eligible?
- Were the boilerplate requirements for this RFP overly stringent? In real life, why does this happen?
- When changing the RFP, what risks emerged? In real life, who would be an ally in mitigating these risks?
- How might this exercise inform your procurement process?

STRATEGY NOTES

Here are some creative RFP strategies government staff have come up with:

- Accept electronic submissions
- Provide a vendor worksheet
- Require pre-bid meeting and site visit
- Unbundle contract
- Encourage or require subcontracting
- Specify cultural menu in the scope
- Cap insurance at the contract value
- Fewer reference letters
- Joint responsibility for data collection
- Turn requirements into preferences

JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS

*GAME
MATERIALS*

Townsville Fact Sheet

ABOUT TOWNSVILLE

Welcome to the City of Townsville, a city of about 100,000 that is on the cusp of its Bicentennial.

To celebrate, the City is planning a full weekend of honors and festivities. The City is in search of a vendor to provide full-service catering over the course of the weekend.

This matters because the Mayor has recently announced a goal of awarding 25 percent contract share to Small Business Enterprises, and 15 percent contract share to Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBES). This RFP should further that goal, while also hiring a vendor that will do a great job catering the festivities.

Townsville's big priorities are sustainability, cultural inclusivity, holding vendors accountable to concrete metrics, and of course: very delicious food!

YOUR TEAM'S GOALS FOR THE CATERING CONTRACT

- Provide delicious food, table service, setup, and cleanup for 500 guests over two days of celebrations at City Hall.
- Provide bilingual, culturally responsive food service for Townsville's diverse guests.
- Sustainable food service, with a focus on compostable items and reduced waste.

BACKGROUND NOTES

- The last major municipal event was successfully catered by National Event Dining Group. Now, the team is planning to **reuse that RFP** as the starting point.
- At other City events, there's been feedback—both positive and negative—about catering services. The Mayor wants detailed **data** on resident satisfaction.
- The neighboring town, Cloud City, had a **nightmare vendor** cater their May Day festivities. Since then, they've required high insurance and many references for their vendors, and recommend that you do, too.

Perspective #1: Large, National Vendors

In your experience, these vendors tend to have polished, professional service—even if they're not as responsive to community culture.

A vendor of this type, National Event Dining Group, was awarded the last municipal catering contract. They provided excellent service, if a bit impersonal.

You strongly believe the team could **save time and still get quality service** by simply reusing the last major catering RFP.

THIS KIND OF VENDOR MIGHT BRING...

- 1,200 employees
Annual Revenue of \$145 million
- Insurance Coverage of \$5 million per occurrence
- 32 years in business
- 300 events catered in the last 3 years
- 6 municipal events catered in the last 3 years
- 20+ references available

Number available to bid on this contract: 1

WHY YOU LIKE THIS KIND OF VENDOR:

- Could complete work directly without hiring subcontractors. You think this will lead to **fewer service coordination errors**.
- Has a **high capacity to track outcome data**. If something goes wrong, this type of vendor has the staffing and experience to submit a detailed report.
- Townsville **wouldn't need a pre-bid meeting** for this type of vendor. As an experienced incumbent, they understand City Hall logistics, event expectations, and all the detailed insurance and legal requirements the RFP is sure to include.
- They even have a 24/7 customer service support line.

YOUR CONCERNS FOR THE RFP:

- Less experienced vendors might need a pre-bid meeting, as they're not familiar with Townsville's processes. Since time is scarce, a pre-bid meeting might be too big a lift for your department.
- You doubt that small vendors could complete the work directly.

Perspective #2: Mid-Sized Regional Vendors

You've seen this type of vendor cater events within your state and the next one over. While their service may contain a few hiccups, they're overall a reliable choice.

There's an up-and-coming mid-sized vendor, EveryFork Sustainable Events, that got its start in the next county over. They got a feature in the local paper for their sustainability focus: reducing food waste, compostable serve ware, and delicious vegan options.

Working with this type of vendor would be **new** for Townsville. However, you think it could be a great choice for both **solid service and alignment with the Mayor's goals**.

THIS KIND OF VENDOR MIGHT BRING...

- 40 employees
Annual Revenue of \$2.4 million
- Insurance Coverage of \$1 million per occurrence
- 6 years in business
- 27 events catered in the last 3 years
- 1 municipal event catered in the last 3 years
- 6 references available

Number available to bid on this contract: 1

WHY YOU LIKE THIS KIND OF VENDOR:

- Compared to larger, more standardized vendors, this type of vendor may have practices **responsive to local issues**, like composting and hiring local.
- This type of vendor could collect robust **data** within a specialty area, like sustainability. They might need support with tracking other outcome data, however.

YOUR CONCERNS FOR THE RFP:

- Large vendors probably can't guarantee **bilingual staff** who are familiar with Townsville's local culture.
- Awarding a contract to a national vendor won't align with the **Mayor's small business initiative**.

Perspective #3: Small Local MWBE Vendors

In Townsville, co-op community kitchens are popping up on the West Side, which is slowly revitalizing. You've passed one on your way to work: Sembrando Salud Catering Co-op.

Your aunt hired Sembrando Salud for her wedding of about 300 people. You found the food to be delicious, the staff able to serve guests of all backgrounds, and the service well-executed (although stretched a little thin).

You think a nearby MWBE vendor like Sembrando Salud could be **a great local option...** but you worry that the Bicentennial is **too large an event** for a vendor like them to handle.

THIS KIND OF VENDOR MIGHT BRING...

- 14 employees
Annual Revenue of \$720,000
- Insurance Coverage of \$1 million per occurrence
- 4 years in business
- 12 events catered in the last 3 years
- 0 municipal events catered in the last 3 years
- 5 references available

Number available to bid on this contract: 3

WHY YOU LIKE THIS KIND OF VENDOR:

- Being local, this type of vendor **hires Townsville residents** that reflect many walks of life. **Bilingual service and memorable, locally-inspired food** is a given.
- This type of vendor partners with other local food vendors. If they could subcontract, there might be positive effects for **other small businesses**.
- Delivering a proposal to City Hall is feasible for a local business.
- Hiring such a vendor would align squarely with Townsville's **small business goals**.

YOUR CONCERNS FOR THE RFP:

- Serving **500 guests may be a stretch** for this kind of vendor.
- Being smaller, this type of vendor isn't likely to have the experience or capacity to track **outcome data**. You might need to spend time creating reporting templates.

Perspective #4: Very Small Local Vendors

Within Townsville city limits, small restaurants with catering services are constantly opening and going out of business. Only a few have stood the test of time- like Townsville Family Kitchen.

A local staple, residents love Townville Family Kitchen's comfort food menu and classic desserts. They often cater office parties and even events for the local college.

With the popularity of these **hometown favorites**, you think a vendor like this would in some ways be a great choice for the Bicentennial. However, you're certain that **a lot of support would be needed** to ensure quality at the anticipated scale.

THIS KIND OF VENDOR MIGHT BRING...

- 9 employees
Annual Revenue of \$475,000
- Insurance Coverage of \$500,000 per occurrence
- 15 years in business
- 8 events catered in the last 3 years
- 0 municipal events catered in the last 3 years
- 4 references available

Number available to bid on this contract: 2

WHY YOU LIKE THIS KIND OF VENDOR:

- Being local, this type of vendor hires **Townsville residents** that reflect many walks of life. **Bilingual service and memorable, locally-inspired food** is a given.
- Delivering a proposal to City Hall is feasible for a local business.
- Hiring a small, local business aligns directly with the **Mayor's initiative**.

YOUR CONCERNS FOR THE RFP:

- This type of vendor certainly **could not provide the full scope directly**. Could there be other ways to incorporate their specialties into the Bicentennial?
- Procurement has been pushing a new e-procurement system, but you're much more comfortable with reviewing hard copy documents. You have a "wet signature" culture, and don't see why it should change.

RFP Revision Worksheet

Use this worksheet to revise the RFP.

You may **add, remove, merge or split** requirements, or even **keep them the same**.

You may also consider indicating whether a change is required, preferred, or supported (e.g. with a template).

RFP SECTION	ORIGINAL LANGUAGE	REVISION ("WE REQUIRE...")
Background and Scope	One vendor must provide all services directly. The City will award one contract to a single vendor responsible for the full scope of services.	<i>Example: The City will retain one or more providers to provide catering services.</i>
Schedule	No pre-bid meeting or live Q&A. Responses shared by addendum.	
Experience	5 years catering + 3 years municipal experience. Experience providing culturally competent service and English/Spanish bilingual staff.	
Proposal Contents	5 reference letters + resumes + org chart. List of events catered within last 3 years.	
Data Tracking and Reporting	Contractor responsible for establishing tracking systems for various metrics.	
Insurance/Bond	\$1M insurance + \$500K bid bond.	
Submission Guidelines	Hard copy in-person to City Hall. Signed original and three copies.	
Other Changes (Optional)	Any other additions, removals, resources, or approaches recommended by your group.	

Townsville Bicentennial Catering RFP

SOLICITATION CATEGORY: Goods and Services

DESCRIPTION: Catering for Townsville Bicentennial Celebration

REQUESTING AGENCY: Parks and Recreation

BACKGROUND

The City of Townsville seeks proposals for catering services for the Townsville Bicentennial Celebration. A thriving, diverse city of 100,000 residents, Townsville is marking a new era with a commitment to supporting MWBEs and small and local businesses.

GOALS

- Provide delicious food, table service, setup, and cleanup for 500 guests over two days of celebrations at City Hall.
- Provide bilingual, culturally responsive food service for Townsville's diverse guests.
- Sustainable food service, with a focus on compostable items and reduced waste.

SCOPE

The selected vendor will provide catering for two days of gatherings serving approximately 500 attendees, including food and beverage service, setup, staffing, cleanup, serve ware, linens, buffet service, and table service.

The selected vendor must provide all catering services directly. The City will award one contract to a single vendor responsible for the full scope of services.

SCHEDULE

The proposal timeline includes an RFP release, a window for proposers to submit questions, an evaluation period, an intent to award, and a final award date.

May 1st, 2026	Release Request for Proposals
June 1st, 2026	Proposer's Questions due by 5:00 pm
July 1st, 2026	Proposals Due by 2:00 pm
July 2026	Proposals Evaluated by City
August 2026	Notice of Intent to Award
September 2026	Contract Awarded

All questions must be submitted in writing by the deadline above. Direct questions to Bryan Pryce, Senior Buyer, at bpryce@townsville.gov. Responses will be shared by addendum. No pre-bid meeting, site visit, or other live question-and-answer session will be held.

Townsville Bicentennial Catering RFP

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Proposers must demonstrate experience serving large events ranging from 101 to more than 1,000 attendees. The successful proposer must have at least five (5) consecutive years of professional catering experience and at least three (3) years of experience catering municipal events.

Proposers must also demonstrate the ability to provide culturally competent service and sufficient English/Spanish bilingual staff to serve Townsville's multilingual resident population.

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

The technical proposal must include:

- a. A history of the organization, organizational structure, and resumes of key supervisory staff.
- b. A list of events catered within the past three (3) years, with detailed descriptions of services provided
- c. Five (5) letters of reference from events or venues served within the past five years.
- d. A sample menu for the Bicentennial event.
- e. A description of sustainability practices such as food waste reduction, compostable packaging, and support for local producers.

DATA TRACKING AND REPORTING

The successful proposer must establish tracking systems for meal delivery, dietary accommodations, proof of receipt, service disruptions, corrective actions, feedback, wasted meals, and food safety incidents.

LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

The proposer must maintain insurance acceptable to the City, including general liability coverage of at least \$1,000,000 per occurrence. A bid security bond of \$500,000 is required.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposals must be submitted to City Hall in one sealed envelope or package marked "Townsville Bicentennial Catering." Electronic submissions will not be accepted. Each proposal must include one signed original and three copies.

Late, incomplete, electronic, or improperly marked proposals will not be accepted.

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